

**Interview with Edwin and Nickie Henderson
conducted by Mary Lipsey for the
Providence District History Project Providence Perspective**

August 7, 2008

Mary: Hey, this is August 7th 2008, I'm in the home of Edwin Henderson and Nickie Graves Henderson and we are going to be interviewing both of them and I'm Mary Lipsey.

Edwin: I was wondering if we could clarify that this is the home built by Edwin Bancroft Henderson and Mary Ellen Meriwether Henderson.

Mary: And those are your grandparents?

Edwin: Those are my grandparents and this house was built and they moved into this house in 1913.

Mary: Okay and once again would you say their names.

Edwin: Edwin Bancroft Henderson.

Mary: Is that the first?

Edwin: The first.

Mary: And?

Edwin: And Mary Ellen Meriwether Henderson.

Mary: And is Meriwether spelled like Louis and Meriwether?

Edwin: Actually yes.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: Ah, Meriwether Lewis is actually Meriwether.

Mary: Okay, and were they originally from this area or did they move to the Falls Church area?

Edwin: Um, Edwin Henderson's people lived here in Falls Church; his grandmother built a home here in 1893 at one approximately 125 South Washington. 121 still stands and that was a part of their property as well. Freddie Foot who owned Seven Corners was his uncle. When he got married he moved into the home of his father and mother and took over his grandmother's house at 125 South Washington and they moved here in 1910.

Um, Edwin Henderson was born in Southwest Washington, D.C. on School Street. And Mary Ellen Henderson was born at – what's the address it's on –

Nickie: 1822

Edwin: 1822

Nickie: 13th Street.

Edwin: 13th Street

Mary: In Washington

Edwin: in Washington, D.C. which is about a block off of U Street.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: It's in the U Street district of Washington, D.C.

Mary: And then so he came out to live with an uncle – is what you said.

Edwin: His parents.

Mary: Oh, his parents – the whole family moved out here?

Edwin: Yes.

Mary: Okay, and what about her family?

Nickie: That's how I think it's a little confusing.

Mary: Right.

Nickie: When Edwin and Mary Ellen Meriwether Henderson married in 1910 they came out to Falls Church to live with Edwin's family.

Mary: As a couple?

Nickie: Yes.

Mary: Okay, I was thinking they were still teenagers. Okay and so they set up – they lived with their parents and then built this house themselves? Yeah, well his parents.

Edwin: This house was a ah – they bought it out of a Sears catalogue.

Mary: Really.

Edwin: Yes.

Mary: Oh, my goodness.

Nickie: Was it 250 or number 25 and we actually just found that out a couple of years ago through a wonderful coincidence; a lady who is well into her eighties now came by looking for my husband Ed and I didn't know who it was banging on the door and I look out and I see this big Buick parked in the drive way. And I look out and I see it's this little old lady and I said well she looks harmless enough so I open the door and she said she's looking for Ed for some reason. And then she started to look around and she said you know Miss Nellie – is what they called Mary Ellen

Mary: Right

Nickie: Meriwether Henderson his grandmother – use to be my schoolteacher and I use to come over here all the time and she started pointing out different things to me; and then she said well you know this was a catalog house they bought this from Sears. And I said no I didn't know that and she said Miss Nellie told me they paid 1800 dollars for this house. So we started doing some research and found that it actually it's identical to model number 250.

Mary: Wow.

Nickie: So, and it was I think it was actually 1500 dollars but they must have had some upgrades.

Mary: Right.

Nickie: But everything is exactly the way they describe it so it was a Sears house.

Mary: It probably came in by train maybe?

Nickie: Yep.

Mary: Came in through the Falls Church Train Station then. That is fascinating.

Edwin: Another thing about this property is that this is where this property is where, at least part of it, was where the Falls Church tobacco barn was.

Mary: Oh, okay.

Edwin: You know in the early days planters paid their taxes in tobacco.

Mary: Tobacco right.

Edwin: Okay and this is where the tobacco barn was. And there was a rolling road between where the Falls Church is which came down between these buildings and down Maple Avenue which use to be Fairfax Street. This was East or West or East Fairfax Street. And this was the road that went to Fairfax because Lee Highway wasn't built until 1922.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: So the front street here was actually the road that went to Fairfax from the Falls Church.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: Where Route 7 went between Alexandria and Leesburg.

Mary: Leesburg right.

Edwin: So this is pretty much at the crossroads of everything that was going on in Colonial times.

Nickie: Now when you use the term Rolling Road I heard some explanation of that

[phone rings, recording paused]

Edwin: Rolling Road was a I think we said all of the taxes were paid in Tobacco in the early part of Colonial America. And they use to put the tobacco into these big rounds and then they would actually roll on the road and that's why they call it the Rolling Road.

Mary: Right, the barrels.

Edwin: The barrels right and for some reason Falls Church doesn't want to give in to the – they won't accept money from the tobacco companies to preserve stuff but I think they really should.

Mary: Yeah.

(laughing)

Mary: Has anybody done archeological you know excavation in and around, you know to find remnants of the barn or anything?

Edwin: Um, no.

Mary: Okay cause I without tearing up your gardens and stuff they can

Edwin: I would like to get a metal detector

Mary: Yeah.

Edwin: to search around

Mary: Search around and see what you find.

Edwin: Might find something in this yard.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: Might even be worth something I don't know.

Mary: Yeah, that would be interesting.

Nickie: Didn't you tell me one time that along the edge of this property that there's little tobacco plants that sometimes spawn.

Edwin: Yeah, but it's not really the tobacco that – those are wild little things. They're just wild they're not cultivated tobacco.

Nickie: I just wondered if it's the remnants of the old tobacco fields.

Edwin: That's hundreds over a hundred years.

Mary: 1700's wasn't it early 1800's yeah.

Edwin: Actually 17th century.

Mary: Oh, okay.

Edwin: So like 1600's and 1700's so.

Mary: Now you were going to tell me the background of your grandmother in relationship to Lord Fairfax.

Edwin: Oh, well we can show you the book that it came from in doing – do you want to tell her about the exhibit you're doing.

Nickie: We did an exhibit on Mary Ellen Meriwether Henderson and initially when we started out we conceptualized it would be a simple foam core panel exhibition and we wrote a proposal for a grant and we got 3,000 dollars from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. And we hired a historian who worked with us in beginning to research her family background. It lead us from Falls Church to Washington, D.C., to Winchester Virginia to Oberlin Ohio to Wellington Ohio. And it turns out that we've been able to document her family very well to the late 1700's. Mary Ellen Meriwether was the daughter of Sarah Louise Meriwether and James Henry Meriwether. Her family

Edwin: No James R. J. Robinson.

Nickie: That was her husband; she married James Meriwether.

Mary: Okay.

Nickie: Her father was R.J. Robinson. Jonathan, Robert Jonathan Robinson and his wife was also a Mary Robinson. They initially they were in Winchester, Virginia he was in Winchester and he tells the story in this book which we will share with you that when he was 16 his father who was free as he was free, his father died and that his father was a barber. And that he took his mother and his six siblings and moved to Alton, Illinois where he opened a barber shop which is not surprising since he was trained as a barber and his father was trained as a barber. What was surprising in this biography for a three paragraph biography he says that Abraham Lincoln was one of his customers.

Mary: Oh my gosh.

Nickie: He also, then he moved from there to Wellington, Ohio.

Edwin: He moved to Springfield and Alton

Nickie: He moved to Springfield and then right to Alton, Illinois and then moved to Wellington. Well we were able to find his marriage license which in his little blurb he said we were the first colored marriage this side of the Ohio River in 1837.

Mary: Wow.

Nickie: They didn't even keep documents you know pre

Mary: To find a marriage certificate is incredible.

Edwin: We also have both of their free papers.

Mary: Wow.

Nickie: Yes, so they moved to, they spent most of their time in Wellington as a family and the city, the town still remembers the family. And I mean we went

into Wellington and asked about the Robinsons and they said oh you mean the black family that use to live on such and such a street. Well it turns out that he was - the family was they were entrepreneurs they owned the first and only bakery in Wellington.

Edwin: Barber Shop.

Nickie: Barber Shop, we have photographs of the Barber Shop, we have photographs of the bakery. Ah and Mary Ellen's aunt which would have been Robinson's daughter was, no it was her daughter, her aunt but it was his niece was the town librarian.

Mary: Wow.

Nickie: They named a wing of the Library after her and they have lots of pictures of her and various other family members. And then we met through correspondence the only descendant of the Robinson family. Her husband was the grandson of R. J. Robinson.

At any rate the other thing that was fascinating was that he describes his family heritage; he said that he was born free and his wife was born free. But his wife was the descendant of Colonel Neville of Revolutionary War fame and that he was the descendant of Lord Fairfax.

Edwin: No.

Nickie: Okay, tell it right honey.

Edwin: His mother

Nickie: His mother

Edwin: was the descendant of Colonel Neville.

Nickie: Okay.

Edwin: Not his wife's mother. And his father was a descendant of Lord Fairfax.

Nickie: Okay.

Edwin: He didn't say anything about his wife's family he was talking about himself.

Nickie: Well he says that his wife was also free. And we know that she was born free.

Mary: Now Pocahontas is in here somewhere too. If I remember you telling me?

Edwin: Yeah, well see that's in Mary Ellen's family okay. As far as – Pocahontas comes in on my grandfather's side.

Mary: Okay, and that's Edwin

Edwin: You're right and this really comes from the book about the history of Falls Church that they interviewed my grandfather for "By Fence and Fireside", by Stedman. And what it says basically is that E.B. Henderson was the descendant his oldest descendant that he can trace back to was a Chief Mematoe of the Rappahannock tribe and he was the uncle of Powhatan. And of course Powhatan daughter was Pocahontas.

Mary: Was Pocahontas. Okay, alright.

Edwin: But then they switched to a more local history saying that Mematoe's grandson was killed – his name was Chief John Logan and he was killed to rid the Fitzhugh plantation of its Indians that lived on the property by a Colonel Broadwater – Colonel Broadwater when he confronted Chief John Logan he didn't want to move because he felt that that was his place, at least during that time of the year because the Indians moved around. So in the skirmish John Logan and his wife were killed; but their young son was saved by one of Broadwaters soldiers named Andrew Hicks. And so he saved the baby – gave him his name Andrew Hicks and put him on the Fitzhugh plantation to be raised by the slaves and actually a number of Indians that also lived on the plantation; to be raised by them.

Mary: Now this is the Fitzhugh plantation in Fairfax County?

Edwin: Right.

Mary: The Tobacco, the Ravensworth area. Yeah cause he owned thousands of acres in Fairfax County.

I wanted to ask you Nickie when you were saying, before I forgot, we got a grant. You haven't explained to us what your relationship is and how – what you mean by getting a grant.

Nickie: Oh, well Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to preserve the history of the civil rights pioneers who lived in and around Falls Church and Northern Virginia.

So one of the persons who was involved was Mary Ellen Meriwether Henderson. So our organization applied for a grant to do an exhibit about Mary Ellen Meriwether Henderson. And during the research is when we uncovered all of this fascinating history. When we asked for a couple more thousand dollars because we had discovered all of this history the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities said we think you need to come in for a much larger grant; which we did. And between the grant we received from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, the Washington, D.C. Humanities Council, and the City of Falls Church and various other fund raising efforts we were able to create a museum quality traveling exhibit on Mary Ellen Meriwether Henderson of two videos, it's a multimedia exhibit. It's a panel exhibit but we have artifacts, we have video, interactive components and it really turned out to be quite

Mary: And where is the exhibit?

Nickie: Right now it's in storage and it is going to be at the Alexandria Black History Museum in February and March.

Mary: That's wonderful. Well, let's get back to 1913 with your grandparents came here to this house right; and raised a family – what kind of occupations did they have whatever?

Edwin: They were teachers in Washington, D.C., but the rule was that married women couldn't teach

Mary: Right.

Edwin: any longer so she moved out here. He continued to teach in Washington starting in 1910 after they got married on Christmas Eve 1910.

Edwin: And um so they moved here and they lived with his parents, um William Henderson and Louisa Mars Henderson at the house at 125 South Washington. What were you going to say?

Nickie: I was going to say that they met in 1903 while they were both attending Minor Teachers College - it was then called Normal School Number Two and later became known as Minor's Teachers College at Howard University. And they met in 1903 and they knew that they wanted to spend their lives together; however Mary Ellen came from a fairly well to do family and Evie wanted to from what we understand wanted to be able to provide for her in the fashion that she was accustomed to so for seven years they courted until they felt that they had enough money to be married.

Well in 1910 they knew she wasn't going to be able to teach anymore so that would deprive them of that income. So when they moved out here he continued to teach in Washington but she couldn't teach in Washington anymore. So they came out here and began to farm we have a fabulous picture of her standing – we have a beautiful picture of her in this beautiful fabulous gown. And then we think it was taken probably around 1909 and then probably in 1919 or so because she has the two children and she's in her farm dress with the hay in the background.

Mary: How times have changed.

(Laughing)

Edwin: Yeah, my father sitting there in the dust and the dirt and the chickens and the big stack of hay.

Mary: But the farm was right here.

Edwin: Across the street.

Mary: Oh, across the street.

Edwin: Well across Lee Highway

Mary: Oh okay, right okay.

Edwin: until 1922.

Mary: So how many acres did they own approximately?

Edwin: Well in this – we have a quarter acre right now and it was like a shot gun line. It went from here on Maple Avenue just straight back beyond where Colman Powell Sports is over there to where ah the cemetery of the ah

Mary: Second Baptist?

Edwin: not Second Baptist, Galloway Methodist.

Mary: Oh, okay, alright okay.

Edwin: But he also along with four other guys bought the land where the ah, he bought an 87 acre farm where the National Memorial Cemetery is.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: And actually that use to be part of Camp Alger where the Spanish American War soldiers were trained before they went to

Mary: Right.

Edwin: Cuba.

Mary: And that's quite a story in itself.

Edwin: Yeah.

Mary: All about Camp Alger

Edwin: The Fenwick Historical Society is something which had asked me to give them some pictures of the old farmhouse that was there which no longer exists of course. But that was an 87 acre farm over there off of Lee Highway where the National Memorial Cemetery is today.

Mary: Okay if there is a farmhouse there – but you said the four other men they owned the 87 acres so did one of those men live in that farmhouse? Cause he lived here.

Edwin: I'm not sure because those other men actually worked in the Washington, D.C., school district along with him.

Mary: Oh okay.

Edwin: And they were known as night farmers because they would be out there with their lantern and their mule farming

Mary: At dark – oh my goodness.

Edwin: after dark.

Nickie: They were called shade farmers.

Edwin: I haven't seen that term before.

Nickie: Oh, okay – but ah they worked the farm after

Mary: After doing their teaching duties, yeah.

Nickie: after doing their days work yeah.

Mary: Do you know if he rode the train into Washington or

Edwin: The trolley, yes.

Mary: The trolley okay.

Edwin: Until 1922 after his life was threatened by the KKK and then he started driving in and he got a license to carry a pistol.

Mary: Did they come to his home and threaten him or what.

Edwin: Um, well there was two ways in this book The History of the Fairfax County Branch of the NAACP there is a transcribed letter that was sent to him. He said there were over a hundred pieces in a scrapbook similar to that. And then

there were also threats on – made by telephone particularly after there was direct dial and you didn't have to go through the operator.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: The operator – they would tell the operator no more calls after a certain time at night. But after that when they had direct dial and this you know they'll be threatening calls all through the night and so I think they either had an unlisted number or they put it in my grandmother's name so they wouldn't know that this was his home. And it was said that these calls happened all the way into the early 1960's.

Mary: Wow, now in the - is it the 1920's or 1930's the Falls Church went through something and tried to disenfranchise the black citizens; am I right on that, if I'm remembering it right?

Nickie: Mary can I say something else about the

Mary: Sure, yes.

Nickie: telephone calls. The lady that I told you about earlier Miss Waunita who came by to tell us

Mary: About the Sears catalogue?

Nickie: right, she also shared with us at another point in time that her family's name was Henderson and her mother's name started with an E so the mail that was intended for E. B. Henderson often came to her family's house. Her mother would open it up and when she saw it was hate mail she would tear it up and say Miss Millie doesn't need to see anything like this.

Mary: Wow, wow.

Nickie: And then she told us a story of Mary Ellen getting a letter that was so hateful that she gathered the two children up and hid under the house until E.B. came home.

Mary: Because of the – you know we always think about the KKK being in the south, we don't think of it being cause Virginia is south but you know what I'm trying to think of and as we envision people in white robes and pointed hats and stuff like that – does your grandparents share any memories – were these people their neighbors or did they know any of them – let's hope not.

Edwin: They probably did – there were crosses burned in the yard. The stronghold of the Klan use to be Balston.

Mary: Oh, okay.

Edwin: Okay.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: And at least from listening to the interviews of my grandfather's and he had to ride through Balston in order to get to

Mary: Washington.

Edwin: Washington, okay.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: Ah, and he had that pistol. And he use to also take students with him as a number of people who worked in Washington did so they could go to school because there was no high school for blacks students past the seventh grade

Mary: Right.

Edwin: until 1954 when Luther Jackson was built; where I teach. But the other thing is that in – before – right after they moved out here before they moved into this house his father William Henderson who worked in Washington at the National Engravers Office of Engraving was thrown from the train even though he was in the black section of the trolley in 1912. And my father came down to get on the train to go to Washington for his job, he saw his father there my grandfather there. E.B went to get on the train and he saw his father there, you know, and asked what happened and he told that he was thrown from the train

by one of the home guard. And so he filed charges against the home guard for damages. And there was a dramatic trial that took place in the court room. The home guard was on one side and all the African Americans were on the other and a prominent citizen of – a lawyer- here in Falls Church Mr. Deputron testified on behalf of William Henderson my great grandfather and the person who threw my great grandfather from the train was charged twenty dollars.

Mary: And do you know the reason he did this, I mean was it just being nasty – you know why did he throw him off the train?

Nickie: From what we heard William Henderson went into the back of the train like he was supposed to and he sat where he was supposed to but a white woman came in and for whatever reason decided she wanted to sit in the seat where he was so I guess she told this gentleman

Mary: To move him.

Nickie: and he threw him from the train so she could sit where she wanted to.

Mary: So physically threw him off the train.

Nickie: um hum.

Mary: Was the train moving or do you know?

Edwin: It wasn't said and I don't think it was.

Mary: Okay, now but this was a black community in this area am I right? I mean up and down.

Nickie: There's one other thing about the

Mary: Train?

Nickie: Yeah, even though they won the case which was atypical at that time

Mary: Right.

Nickie: that a black would win that kind of case. The next day at the train station an effigy of Mr. Deputron was hanging outside of the train station.

Mary: Wow.

Edwin: In effigy.

Mary: Now the home guard I'm not familiar with either.

Edwin: They were like a local - well the home guard goes back to the Civil War they were like a militia.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: So they were kind of like an armed police force.

Mary: And it was Falls Church – were they paid or volunteers? Sometimes militia can be volunteers.

Edwin: I don't know that they were paid.

Mary: Okay. I was just curious because I'd never heard that before. Well now is it William or Edwin that got involved in the starting of the NAACP?

Edwin: Well see Edwin my grandfather was as well as Mary Ellen they were both members of the Washington D.C., NAACP okay. And you know the NAACP was a fairly new organization started in 1909. Really I don't think they started memberships until 1910; and so they were members of the Washington, D.C. branch. And there were no rural branches of the NAACP at that time; one reason I think was because of the requirements to start a chapter were more than a lot of rural communities had. You know they were willing to sign up and be a part of an organization that resisted the will of the status quo in most southern white communities. Actually Falls Church at that time was about 30 to 40% populated with African Americans; unlike today it is more like 3%.

But if we want to get to what happened in 1915 shortly, you know, after 1912, the town council sought to pass an ordinance that would have restricted where blacks could live in town; segregation ordinance and it stemmed from a 1913 law passed

by the Virginia Legislature that said that towns could pass such an ordinance. And basically how it was worded that after dark African Americans could not be in certain sections of the town okay. Um Falls Church has a history though of northern sympathizers that moved to this community. I don't know if they were working in the government across the river. You know this is maybe a bedroom community especially with the trolley. But even the Cherry Hill farmhouse was established by northerners who moved south before the Civil War. And African Americans lived on many of the main streets throughout the town: Leesburg Pike and Fairfax Street.

Mary: Well I also read like Columbia Baptist ran its school for African Americans; run by abolitionists I don't know I've never documented that but I've read that.

Edwin: Okay that's the Reed story the Hiram Read story.

Mary: Oh, is that

Nickie: I read that Columbia Baptist was tearing down part of the church and they either gave or sold the wood to African Americans to build the school

Mary: Maybe that's what

Nickie: and Galloway Baptist, Galloway Methodist had a school building attached to the church or behind the church or – at some point that building burned down. So I don't know if that's the connection.

Mary: Right, okay. Well back to your story about – I diverted us here.

Edwin: I don't even recall where we left off now.

Mary: Well we were talking about the segregation law that was passed in 1915.

Edwin: Okay.

Mary: And that the blacks could not be out after dark.

Edwin: In certain sections of town; and the thing about it was that they realized that that wouldn't work because blacks lived in close proximity and are neighbors

to whites throughout the town. So they changed the ordinance to say that blacks could live in their home but if they wanted to sell they would have to sell to whites. And if they wanted to stay here they would have to find accommodations in the districts that were restricted for blacks which was basically along Annandale Road which back then was known as Shreve's Road.

Mary: Right. So it was a forced segregation.

Edwin: Right.

Mary: Basically.

Edwin: Right, right. And ah I think Grandpa and the Tinnars would have been affected by this and so they – E. B. called a meeting and it took place at the home of Joseph Tinner. And at this meeting there were nine African American citizens of the community and they called themselves The Council of Nine – who got together and decided that they would form an organization called The Colored Citizens Protective League the CCPL. And they formed this organization to fight this ordinance and to protect the colored citizenry.

Um, they hired two lawyers who filed an injunction against the ordinance so that it could not be set in force. And they wrote letters to all the members of the Town Council and to citizens that they knew were either for or against the ordinance. Brown's Hardware for instance they wrote Mr. Brown and they said that we know that you are in support of our effort and then there was a Mr. Burgee or another member of the Town Council and they asked why are you for the ordinance.

And they also wrote a letter to W.E.B. Du Bois in New York asking if they could form a branch of the NAACP here in Falls Church. They wrote back and said – the secretary wrote back and said there were no rural branches but that they would recognize the CCPL as a standing committee authorized by the NAACP. And James Weldon Johnson who we know from Lift Every Voice and Sing, and his autobiography, was a field agent for the NAACP and he actually came here and spoke at the Second Baptist Church and other communities around here.

And when they – Falls Church was not actually allowed to have a branch until 1918; where a lot of branches actually came in in 1918. So the Falls Church Branch was known as the Falls Church and Vicinity NAACP.

Today you might have Fairfax County Branch or the County we're in having a branch of the NAACP but then it was the first rural branch of the NAACP; but it was called the Falls Church and Vicinity NAACP.

Mary: Now what happened to the ordinance?

Edwin: Good point, the two lawyers which they hired prepared a brief regarding the legality or illegality of the ordinance and they met with the Town council and shared their brief and their argument against the ordinance. And the Town Council decided not to go any further in forcing the ordinance.

As it turned out two years later the United States Supreme Court heard an identical case to the one here in Falls Church and it was ruled that segregation ordinances were unconstitutional. So in 1917 there is a ruling by the Supreme Court which deemed that case and similar cases unconstitutional. The big, it's one of the first victories for the legal defense that the NAACP is known for.

Mary: Now the thing that is curiosity is that this community of people that have lived here all their lives and lived here and worked here – I'm trying to find out why at this time did this ordinance come about, you know because I assume their families have been here not just your family but others for 30, 40, 50 years was there an event or something that caused the Council members to suddenly do this – do you know of anything?

Edwin: Well throughout history there have been ebbs and flows as far as race relations are concerned and you know we have to go back a little bit earlier I think and talk about – okay, you know that after slavery there was reconstruction and then in 1880 there was a man named Freddie Foote, Jr. (Frederick Forrest Foote, Jr.) who became the first black Town Councilman. He died in 1986, somewhere between 1986 and 1890 the Town Council of Falls church gerrymandered and gave most of the area where African Americans were back to Fairfax County, okay, it wasn't a part of Falls Church anymore. And they said they did that

because blacks voted Republican. And you know of course the Republican Party was the party of Lincoln.

Mary: Um hum.

Edwin: Okay, so blacks voted, always voted when they voted Republican. And, ah the Democratic Party of course was the party of southern segregationists whose main thrust was to disenfranchise and to strip African Americans of the rights which they had received during reconstruction and to put in their place black codes and Jim Crow laws.

So around 1890 along Annandale Road that whole community was gerrymandered out of the town okay. And so the districts were redrawn all the blacks were out of the town so their votes didn't affect the Town Council and the other elections here in the town of Falls Church.

And so between 1890 and 1912 or 1913 you know you have a very different politic here in the community of Falls Church. But you still had a split between the whites who some being northern sympathizers and the other one being southern locals you know that created a dichotomy that affected the black population.

Mary: Right, wow.

Nickie: Two of the whites that would be among that number would be the black sympathizers; Reverend Read who from what we understand had a school and was teaching blacks to read right after the emancipation and he was killed.

Edwin: That was during the Civil War.

Nickie: Oh, during the Civil War?

Edwin: Yes because he was killed by Mosby's Raiders Cyrum Read because he was teaching blacks during the Civil War, to read and write and Mosby killed him.

Nickie: He and his daughter.

Mary: Because of that?

Edwin: Yeah.

Nickie: Now, once he was killed the daughter moved north and nobody knows what happened to her. But one of the new buildings right up on Broad Street is named for Reverend Read. And the other person that I think had an impact

Edwin: There's another Read, there were two Reads and the other one you're talking about was the one who had the impact. But I'm not sure of the first name but Hyrum was killed during the Civil War. But there was another Read as well I don't know if they were related that came after the Civil War in the 1860's.

Nickie: Okay, that's the one I'm speaking of and that's the one that the building was named after.

Edwin: No, the first one is the one that the building was named after.

Nickie: Anyway um the other person who was - was his name General Howard?

Edwin: I'm not sure I know what you're talking about.

Nickie: The guy that Jerry Barrett is working with us he wants to do the play on - was his name General Howard?

Edwin: That has nothing to do with Falls Church though; General Howard is who Howard University is named after and he was part of Sherman's, General Sherman's army, you know who

Mary: Marched to the sea.

Edwin: General Howard they came up north through the Sea Island, South Carolina and established the edict of 40 acres and a mule to the slaves that were

Nickie: Well that's not the person I'm talking about.

Edwin: Okay.

Nickie: What I'm talking about ah there was a white gentleman who lived, he lived in Falls Church but he worked in Washington and I believe he was an administrator for a hospital or something of that or maybe it was the prison I'm

not sure, some type of institution. But what he did was to make sure that the African Americans who lived and worked in Falls Church – who farmed – he bought their produce for his institution. So that was his way of

Edwin: You're talking about Colonel Crocker.

Nickie: Okay.

Edwin: And Colonel Crocker was – he bought land and then he sold it to the blacks okay - he was one of the only people. And he actually owned land in Vienna as well and a number of pockets that developed a black population. He was one of the only people that would sell land to blacks okay. And he probably bought it from people that you know after the Civil War needed money. And um he would buy their produce like you were saying, because he sold them the land.

Nickie: And he bought produce for whatever institution

Mary: Right.

Nickie: he was running in Washington, D.C. to make sure you know that they had

Mary: A lively hood yeah.

Nickie: So there's this strength, this dichotomy of people who sympathize and people who you know are very anti.

Mary: Right. Well, let's come up to your parents because if I remember right your mother did eventually go back to teaching here?

Edwin: You mean my grandparents?

Mary: Your grandparents, I'm sorry yeah.

Nickie: There's one other thing we needed to say Mary about

Mary: Yes.

Nickie: the ordinance – how long did it sit on the books.

Edwin: Oh.

Nickie: Tell why and how long.

Edwin: It languished on the books

Nickie: for segregation

Edwin: until 1998 um you know we established the Foundation – I incorporated Tinner Hill Foundation in 1997. And we proposed building the Tinner Hill monument which is at Tinner Hill Road and Lee Highway or South Washington. And when we spoke with the town Council well City Council people about building the monument and wanting to purchase the land on Tinner Hill; the mayor at that time David Snyder went back and saw that it was still on the books, you know, as an ordinance in the City. And so he had it removed

Mary: Very good.

Edwin: from the books in 1998

Nickie: Yeah he was livid right?

Mary: Just gave you a copy of the order to remove it. Well, so anyway then to your grandparents that is Edwin and

Edwin: Mary

Mary: Mary Ellen yes, tell me about them; they started here in 1913 and he taught school and she raised the family but eventually she did go back to teaching?

Edwin: Yes, you want me to tell about them?

Nickie: Well um, after her second child was born my father in law who will be 91 on Sunday

Mary: Wow.

Nickie: um the school for colored children, black children was closed in the area; it was a little two room frame schoolhouse on Annandale Road. And the community came and asked her Mary Ellen if she would reopen the school

because they knew she was a school teacher and she actually had been what they call a model schoolteacher in Washington where if you were so good they would have people come in and observe you and that was your training. So that's how good she had gotten to be. And she told them no she couldn't that she had a new baby and she never had any intention of going back to school, going back to teaching school once she got married. They came again and asked her and again and again and finally the school officials said – asked her. And she said well I can't do that because I have a new baby I have a toddler. And they said what if we find suitable child care for you? If we found someone to take care of the baby and she said okay. And they found somebody to take care of the baby – now that's a piece that's missing because we don't know who that person was – somebody knows who she was.

Edwin: She's right there

Nickie: And we have some pictures that looks like this person could be the you know babysitter but we're not sure but at any rate she went back to teaching in 1919.

Mary: Now was it at that two room schoolhouse?

Nickie: At the two room schoolhouse

Mary: And did that schoolhouse have a name?

Nickie: They called it the colored school at the time. She would walk from here to the school. The school was a frame building – it had no central heat it had a pot belly stove in the middle of the room. It had – there was no running water so they would have to pump water from a neighbor's well and bring it to the school for the children. They had outdoor pit toilets; no janitor, no school bus or anything like that. And a lot of people say well that's what it was like going to school but just a few miles from there white children were being educated in brick schoolhouses with central heat, with janitorial service, um with running water, indoor toilets.

Edwin: Probably a teacher for each grade.

Nickie: So

Mary: How many grades? Was this like the one room schoolhouses that many grades in one room?

Nickie: Actually from what we have been able to glean the first few years she was the only teacher there. And after I think about five years she recruited another teacher so she taught 4th 5th 6th and 7th grade. Mary Ellen taught 4th 5th 6th and 7th grade and Miss Lola White taught

Edwin: Lola Saunders.

Nickie: Lola Saunders taught 1 through 3. So Mary Ellen acted as principle and teacher. Well from the time that she started teaching she was not happy with the surroundings that her students had to be subjected to and our historian researched all the school board notes and made copies and she would periodically go to the school board meetings and she would say we need to build a new school for the black students. And she would also ask for things like books and she would ask for supplies. Um she did this for like 30 years constantly going back and they would put her off and say oh we can't because this or that. And then the war we don't have this and that. And sometimes she would take people from the community with her. Ollie Tenner was a person who was well known in the community and he would go and he would talk and ask about the school.

And then the other thing that was interesting is that the black community would have fund raisers where they would – they did something they called a gingham wedding and they would auction off cakes and things like that and then they would collect all the money and they would give it to her Mary Ellen Henderson and she would go to the school board and they would present the money saying we've raised this much money towards the construction of the colored school.

Well she got nowhere with that. And finally she changed her tactics she decided that she would do a disparity study. Was it 1936 or 1938?

Edwin: Well she did it in the 1940's but it was based on 1936 budget for Fairfax County Public Schools.

Nickie: And the study clearly showed that of taxpayer dollars 97.3 percent were spent on educating white students and the other 2.7 was spent on black students.

Mary: She did this study – the research herself?

Nickie: She did this herself.

Mary: And she presented it to the School Board?

Nickie: She presented it to the School Board and in fact I'm just conjecturing here but it was widely disseminated because we have copies of newspaper articles where it was printed and where people began to dialogue saying this isn't right you know da da da, da da da the Falls Church Echo and other newspapers picked it up. So she was able to build a coalition of blacks and whites interracial committee, parent committee and they continued to agitate and finally in 1948 the new school

Edwin: The James Lee School.

Nickie: The new school, newly constructed school was opened. It was called the James Lee School. The James Lee School had always been on land that had been donated for the education of black children. That's where the little two room schoolhouse stood. James Lee owned a great deal of land in that community. And his descendants are actually very involved in preservation history preservation.

Mary: I've interviewed a couple of them too.

Nickie: Okay.

Mary: I was expecting the school to be named after her but because it was on James Lee property

Nickie: Yes.

Mary: is why it was named James Lee School?

Nickie: Yes.

Mary: Okay. We do have a school named after her today am I right?

Edwin: True.

Nickie: That's right.

Mary: Yeah, so is there more to the story? How many years did she actually teach – do you know?

Nickie: From 1919 until 1950 right?

Mary: 1950 or 1951?

Nickie: 1950 because she was only two years after the new school opened.

Mary: Wow.

Nickie: So, and we have this wonderful recording where she talks about teaching and you know all the things that happened. And it's just so poignant that she says "I'm just happy that I lived to see the day that colored children had a school an adequate school for themselves".

So at any rate she had a reputation in spite of the conditions that her children were educated under the children were very well prepared and all of the teachers that taught them after usually when they went into Washington would say oh, Miss Nellie's students they're just so far ahead, they're prepared so well. Considering we're talking heating the kids I am sure she would have to collect wood for the fire or pump water from the well and this sort of thing and they used cast off books from the white schools – when they ordered their new books they would give them the old books. So she was a pretty phenomenal woman.

Mary: And the alternative for the kids when they left that school was either go into Washington or out to Manassas Industrial School.

Edwin: Right – which was a regional high school

Mary: Right.

Edwin: shared by many counties

Mary: Right.

Edwin: in Northern Virginia indeed.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: The Jennie Dean School as it was sometime called. Now the academic tract students WHO went into Washington they went into the John R. Francis Junior High School which is on the edge of Georgetown. And Georgetown until after World War II was in a large part predominantly black. But they went to John R. Francis and the teachers there said that the students from Miss Nellie's classrooms were better prepared than almost all of the other schools which they received students from.

Now in order for them to go – technically they weren't supposed to go to Washington, D.C. schools but what a lot of them would do is they would catch rides in in the morning. They'd have to have a Washington, D.C. address in order to go

Mary: So a relative or something

Edwin: Yeah.

Mary: Yeah okay.

Nickie: And some of them would ride with his grandfather (meaning Edwin's grandfather) we talked about riding

Mary: Oh, because he is teaching.

Nickie: Right.

Edwin: Well my Dad when he went into Howard.

Nickie: Hum hum.

Mary: But your grandfather was at Howard he wasn't teaching at John R. Francis right?

Edwin: No, my grandfather was

Mary: You said he was a teacher where was he teaching?

Edwin: He was a teacher for the Washington, D.C. colored schools.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: Okay, and he was over physical education.

Mary: alright.

Edwin: Because he was the first African American male certified in - to teach Physical Education in the Country.

Mary: Wow.

Edwin: He got his certification by going to Harvard and going to the Dudley School of physical training there.

Mary: You're talking Harvard University.

Edwin: Harvard University in Cambridge Massachusetts.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: While he was there he learned the game of basketball and he is credited with being the grandfather of black basketball because he was the first one to actually introduce the sports to African Americans on a wide scale organized basis. And this was because after going to Harvard he went to the white Y.M.C.A. in Washington, D.C. to play in a pickup game and they kicked him out. So he started 40 teams of 8 members each to play against one another in the schools and in the Y.M.C.A.'s 12th street Y.M.C.A. And after that he started a school league for the D.C. public colored schools and the white schools didn't even have a school league at the time. The only other, I guess New York did but he also started the first black athletic league; it was called the Interscholastic Athletic Association.

Mary: Now this is William right?

Edwin: No, this is Edwin B.

Mary: Oh, this is Edwin B. okay, alright; I want to get this right.

Edwin: Now Providence Rec. Center is dedicated to him because of his work in physical education not civil rights necessarily.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: But the other thing that he started was the – it's over 100 years old the Eastern Board of Officials which is the first group of African American referees and officials to referee African American athletic competitions.

Mary: Wow.

Edwin: So by doing all of this he actually established the first infrastructure so that African Americans could participate in athletics and sports.

Mary: And he did this under his own motivation, I mean what I'm asking I guess is that he didn't have a big corporate support group behind him?

Edwin: No.

Mary: This is through his own efforts.

Edwin: He also wrote four editions of a handbook for his athletic association published by Spaulding Athletic Equipment Company.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: And so in 1910, 1911, 1912, and 1913 he published under the Spaulding brand the official handbook of the Interscholastic Athletic Association of Middle Atlantic States. And in that it shows all of the participation of African Americans in sports up and down the Atlantic seacoast.

Mary: Now I assume when you say he was thrown out it was because of the color of his skin?

Edwin: Exactly.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: Yes.

Mary: That's what I thought. I'm going to stop.

[Recording Paused]

Mary: Okay, we're all set.

Edwin: Okay, we're talking about Edwin Bancroft Henderson I guess you'd call this Part 2 Henderson Legacy. Ah, Edwin Bancroft Henderson in addition to establishing the infrastructure for African American athletics being the first African American certified in physical education in the public schools and starting the organizations that supported African American athletics also played, was a player as well as a coach. His playing and coaching started with his around 1908 in developing a team at the 12th Street Y.M.C.A. This team he put together with students from the Y.M.C.A. and Howard University to participate in a championship or a league which had been developed between Washington, D.C. and New York City; the Club teams of New York City such as The Smart Set, St. Christopher's, and Alpha Physical Culture Club all had basketball squads playing against each other and at the end of the season they had a tournament known as the Black Negro Basketball World Championships. This was an inner City league that played basketball. And today, they were called Black Fives because each team had five players. The website called BlackFives.com which actually talks about the history of this group and early basketball league by African Americans run by my friend Claude Johnson.

Now E. B. Henderson established this team at the 12th Street Y.M.C.A. and their first year 1909, 1910 team beat all comers and became the World Champions; at least the black basketball world champions. And of course they played their championship game in New York at a casino in Brooklyn on Christmas Eve 1910.

And my grandfather promised his new wife my grandmother Mary Ellen Henderson that after they got married he would no longer play competitive league basketball. They won that game and became the Black Basketball World

Champions for the season 1909 – 1910. Due to his promise to his wife he could no longer play so he went to Howard University and petitioned the University to take the team that he played on and won the Black Basketball World Championship as their first varsity team.

That team minus him went on to be undefeated a second year and won the Black Basketball World Championship two years in a row. My grandfather all five foot ten of him was the starting center for the team and this was very, well you didn't have the seven footers back then or even the six fivers for the most part. But after every made basket they would have a jump ball at center court. So the center position was a lot more critical back in those days.

The other things was that a lot of people in that day and time basketball was a lot rougher because of – and it was played more like football even to the point where they at some point had cages that the players would play in. Because it was to protect the fans from the players but also in many cases protect the players from the fans.

Mary: So you mean there was a cage between the audience

Edwin: Exactly.

Mary: the spectators and the team.

Edwin: And that is why basketball players are known as cages.

Mary: I didn't know that.

Edwin: Yeah, and ah it seemed for a long time until 1904 that basketball was not a game that was played in the African American community at all. There were one or two players like Bucky Lou in Lowell, Massachusetts and they only played on white teams. But there were no large teams or large participation by African Americans. Also in 1904 is the first year that it was an Olympic sport. And it was only after that the African Americans began to get involved in the sport of basketball which is the same year my grandfather learned the sport and started sharing it and teaching it to African Americans in Washington, D.C.

Now in the Interscholastic Athletic Association of Middle Atlantic States was established in 1906, it was the first athletic league. It wouldn't be until 1907 that in New York the different club teams there established the Olympian Athletic League which was the second athletic League for African Americans started the following year after my grandfather started the Interscholastic Athletic Association. So really after his playing days were over other than the organizing and the refereeing and other things that he was doing in athletics he was relegated basically to coaching rather than playing the sport.

Mary: And that of course occupied a lot of his time, I would think.

Edwin: Yes, probably as much as if he were playing.

Mary: Yeah. So maybe the grandmother didn't get all her wishes or her intentions you know to ask him not to play basketball anymore.

Edwin: No, she didn't.

Mary: Still in his blood.

Edwin: And you know a lot of times he wouldn't get home until very late. Um and ah you know, so my grandmother was the one that was really known here in the community more so than him a lot of times because she actually worked with the community. She worked with the children in the community and they knew her.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: More so a lot of times than they knew him.

Mary: And probably she knew generations of the same family for teaching so many years.

Edwin: Yes.

Mary: You know.

Edwin: And so she was always known in her role for the local N.A.A.C.P. She always year after year was known for bringing in the most um, new memberships because she knew and was trusted by the people in the community because she was the teacher at the colored school.

Mary: Now when they met you said when they first met they met at the Second Baptist church, the N.A.A.C.P. did they continue to meet there?

Edwin: No, they met at Normal School Number 2 which became Miners Teachers College around 1902, 1903. And they both belonged to the Washington, D.C. branch of the N.A.A.C.P. Mary Ellen's family was very much an activist family in education and civil rights.

Mary: When I was asking about they met I meant the organization the N.A.A.C.P. where did they physically once the rural organization met where would they have their meetings and how often or whatever?

Edwin: Okay, that's a good question. Because the Second Baptist was always the activist church but usually both ministers from Galloway and Second Baptist were members of the Colored Citizens Protective League and the first branch of the N.A.A.C.P. when it started in 1918.

Mary: So they would meet at one of the churches?

Edwin: Um, I would have to say yes the Second Baptist I think more so.

Mary: Okay, do you know how often they would meet – the organization?

Edwin: No, and I would think that depended on, you know

Mary: The need.

Edwin: The need

Mary: Right.

Edwin: and the current aspects civil rights which they might have to address at that time. You know a lot of their efforts were towards equal educational

opportunities. But then again there were also other issues like public utilities, transportation, and of course you know equal treatment under the courts in the community as well.

I know that the issue of public utilities was an issue because the African American community seldom if ever got electricity and other utilities at the same time that the white communities were being wired and given access to electricity.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: And I think it was almost 10 years after that they wired the black community for electricity and telephone and you know those other utilities which the white communities enjoyed first.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: A lot of people don't understand that I think.

Mary: That's amazing to me absolutely. Well let's come to your father's generation then and tell us about your parents.

Edwin: Okay, my father of course was Mary Ellen and E.B. Henderson's second son there was a first son Edwin, Edwin Meriwether. A lot of people think I'm the third because I'm the third Edwin but I'm the second Edwin Bancroft Henderson.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: Um but they were born, my uncle was born in 1912 and five years later my father was born in 1917. He was actually born in this house.

Mary: And his name is?

Edwin: James Henry Meriwether Henderson, James Henry Meriwether was my grandmother's father.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: And they put Henderson on [unintelligible]

Mary: Right.

Edwin: And they were born here, I'm not sure whether they went to the schoolhouse here or whether they went into Washington. I know that they went in of course for junior high and high school at Dunbar High School in Washington. And then both of them went to Howard University.

My uncle graduated from dentistry school at Howard and became a dentist. His career was basically with the army and at the Lorton correctional facility down in Lorton where the D.C. prison system was.

My father after graduating from Howard applied to the University of Virginia and of course he was denied based on race. But they had a policy back in those days where they would pay for you to go to a school out of state. So he chose, he was accepted at the University of Wisconsin.

Mary: Whoa that's a big

Edwin: And Virginia paid for it.

Mary: What time period was this when was he applying to college?

Edwin: Ah, 1938, 1939.

Mary: Okay. And this was again a way of segregating to keep

Edwin: Keeping the schools segregated by paying for black students to go out of state.

Mary: Right. But your uncle went to dentistry school

Edwin: At Howard.

Mary: at Howard. Okay, alright. So he went off to Wisconsin; that's a long way away.

Edwin: Yeah.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: And he ah, he wanted to be a Doctor but he realized that he didn't really like the sight of blood so he decided to go into medical research. He got his PhD as a plant physiologist and a lot of his career was biochemistry and as a medical researcher. He researched, he and my godfather – okay – right out of Wisconsin he went to, it was during the war 1943, and participated in the war effort there at the Biological and Chemical Warfare Laboratory at the University of Chicago.

He was not associated even though he was also you know the Manhattan Project.

Mary: Yes.

Edwin: And the theoretical work with Einstein underneath the football stadium there at the University of Chicago.

Mary: Was he aware of it going on, probably not.

Edwin: I don't know.

Mary: Yeah.

Edwin: I don't know, um I don't know.

Mary: Yeah.

Edwin: But after that he was grabbed up by the George Washington Carver Research Foundation in Tuskegee. And so he went to Tuskegee and he and my godfather Russell Brown worked with Jonas Salk at the Mayo Clinic in Minneapolis to develop the medium which they created from the one woman who was resistant to the polio strain. And they created the medium in which the vaccine was grown.

For a long time I always asked my Dad what he did and he always told me oh it was just general science stuff and I wouldn't be interested. But an article came out about ten years ago which explained everything that he had done and I said how come you never told me about all of this? Cause after that he got a grant and had a post doctoral fellowship at Cal Tech (California Institute of Technology) in Pasadena as a Dean where he started researching cancer and he met and became good friends with what's the guy billions and billions?

Mary: Bill Gates.

Edwin: No, he's an astronomer.

Mary: An astronomer um.

Edwin: He wrote Contact (Carl Sagan) and ah – well he met a lot of people there while he was doing –

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: And he was there between 1948 and 1950 at Cal Tech. He looked for a job briefly out there, he went to Santa Barbara went to – I know he I took him to my school where I went to photography school in the 1980's it's called Brooke Sensitive but it was the same facility and we went to the quad area and this was Santa Barbara State University which doesn't exist anymore – but he was offered a job there. He went there for an interview but after that he kept researching cancer.

Mary: Was he a single man all this time?

Edwin: No.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: He married my mother in 1948.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: He was at Tuskegee at the George Washington Carver Research Foundation. He wanted to work with Carver as a plant physiologist but during the War when he was in Chicago in 1943 is when Carver died. The Foundation though Clarence Mason the Director of the Foundation came to Chicago and grabbed him up right away. But he was down in Tuskegee teaching and my mother and my father had known each other ever since my father was born. My mother's a month older than my father and

Nickie: Their families knew each other.

Edwin: Right. And so when my father was born

Mary: What's her maiden name again?

Edwin: My mother's name is Betty Alice Francis.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: And they married in Tuskegee, but they had known each other and they had wanted to get married when they were younger but she married someone else. My mother's family is a very prominent family of Washington, D.C. When her parents married it brought together two very prominent families. The Wormleys, James Wormley owned a hotel in Washington, D.C. across – his hotel was on La Fayette Park one block away from the White House at 15th and H Street. And they had owned that property, the Wormleys had owned that block of land in Washington going back to 1787. And that's three years before the survey that created the District of Columbia okay.

Mary: Now this is your mother's family.

Edwin: My mother's family, my mother's, mother's family.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: And at this Hotel the Wormley House is where

Nickie: Sumner

Edwin: Charles Sumner the Senator from Massachusetts lived when he was in Washington, D.C. He didn't buy a home he had a room there; permanent room and he would get his meals and everything at the Wormley House okay, and then go to work every day on Capitol Hill – the Senator from Massachusetts. And it was in one newspaper article rated that one of the finest establishments in all of Washington, D.C.

Mary: Wow.

Edwin: Now this is her mother's family.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: Alright, her father's family comes from the school where the black students had the two room schoolhouse in Falls Church.

Mary: Right, oh.

Edwin: John R. Francis.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: And that was her

Mary: father's family.

Edwin: That was her grandfather.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: And he had a 22 bed sanatorium which meant he had a small hospital at 22nd and Pennsylvania Avenue; almost where the G.W. Women's hospital is today. But it was the only hospital where blacks could go before Freedman's Hospital was built in the late 1800's. And after Freedman's Hospital was built he became the Assistant Director of Surgery at Freedman's Hospital. He was very well to do and he was recognized by Booker T. Washington as one of the prominent African American's of his day. And so this was my mother's family and when her mother and father married it brought these two families together - it was the social event of the time

Mary: Yeah.

Edwin: that these two very prominent families came together. And the Wormley School, there was a Wormley School in Georgetown as well for James Wormley; it was an elementary school it was at one end of Georgetown next to Georgetown University. They just renovated it into 13 condominiums; they kept the façade, the brick façade and renovated the inside into 13 condominiums.

Mary: Oh.

Edwin: It's on Prospect Street right next to Georgetown University, and that, the Wormley School the elementary school on the other end of Georgetown and that's around 22nd and M Street is the John R. Francis Middle School which is junior high school. So these were my mother's parents so you know she was a very, her family is a very prominent member of Washington's black society.

Mary: Right and they married.

Edwin: They married here, they came up and they got a marriage license.

Mary: They came up from Tuskegee.

Edwin: Yeah.

Mary: Now how did she get down to Tuskegee?

Edwin: And they got married at the Arlington Courthouse.

Mary: Oh, okay.

Edwin: But, I guess Dad was lonely or they decided to get back together and she moved – she moved to visit him down there and then they came up here and got married. And this was almost immediately after that Dad's fellowship at Cal Tech kicked in and they moved to Pasadena. And so my sister Ellen and my sister Dena named for Pasadena.

Mary: Oh, that's cute.

Edwin: One sister Dena Rose Alice after the Rose Parade which was in Pasadena and my mother's middle name was Alice. They were both born in Pasadena. And then they moved back to Tuskegee and then in 1952 my brother was born, James Francis Henderson. And then in 1955 I was born Edwin Bancroft Henderson the second.

Now the story behind when I was born – my grandparents immediately came down to Tuskegee to visit. And they were initially going to name me Dave Meriwether Henderson and when they told my grandfather that - because they told him this is the last one absolutely we're not having any more kids. And so

when they told that to my grandfather my grandfather became ill and went upstairs and got in bed. And so the Doctor came and the Doctor you know that was back when doctors came to the house. And the Doctor came and said oh he is gravely ill and we don't know what's wrong with him we just need a little bit more time to wait and see. And so they started talking maybe we should name you after grandpa. Maybe we should name him Edwin Bancroft Henderson. And so they went upstairs and they told grandpa that and he all of a sudden got well.

Mary: He rallied hum.

Mary, Edwin and Nickie: Laughing.

Edwin: And so they named me Edwin Bancroft Henderson the second and Grandpa was well.

Mary: That's a neat story. So.

Nickie: I know this is backtracking – did Ed mention that his grandmother Mary Ellen Henderson was the first black woman to join the League of Women Voters here in Falls Church.

Mary: No.

Nickie: And she was also a founding member of the Democratic Women's Club in Arlington? (She looks to Edwin for the correct location).

Edwin: I don't know where that was. She was also a member of; well she's a charter member of the Falls Church Branch of the League of Women Voters. But she also belonged to the Fairfax County Branch of the League of Women Voters before she belonged to the one in Falls Church.

Nickie: And there is one woman around who is in her nineties who remembers

Mary: Wow.

Nickie: when she was a member.

Mary: Right.

Nickie: There was something else I wanted to tell you about her.

Mary: We want to get the story about how the school was recently named in Falls Church in her honor am I right about that?

Nickie: um hum.

Mary: Okay you want to tell us that story.

Edwin: Okay, it was around 2004 and they were building the school but they wanted to come up with a name because they wanted the school to have its' own identity. For years it had been called the George Mason Middle School and George Mason High School. So they were building this new school and they asked if I wanted to be on the committee to name the new school. And so I gladly said yes. And I don't know I guess I was looking to name it after grandpa and they said they wanted it to be a woman. Okay, so I said then there's Mary Ellen Henderson.

Nickie: And they nominated her.

Edwin: You know there was a lot of back and forth and there was a number of votes and Mary Ellen Henderson did make the final of the names to be considered along with um

Nickie: Dolly Madison and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Edwin: Right.

Mary: Oh, okay Dolly Madison and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Edwin: Yeah.

Mary: Well she's right up there with them.

Nickie: Yeah, well she was actually the only person who had any tie to Falls Church at all.

Mary: Right.

Nickie: So it was quite the

Mary: Yeah, Dolly Madison just passed through.

Nickie: It was really quite a cliff hanger; actually in the end the George Mason, Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary Ellen Henderson were the finalist.

Edwin: Because they wanted, they felt that if they kept it the same it would be you know a lot cheaper as far

Mary: Continuity yeah.

Edwin: And all this other stuff.

Nickie: So the votes turned out to be in her favor.

Edwin: Whose favor?

Nickie: Mary Ellen Henderson's.

Edwin: No, that's not how that happened.

Nickie: She didn't win the vote – they didn't name it after her?

Edwin: There was a tie.

Mary: Oh.

Nickie: But when they broke the tie it was in her favor.

Edwin: Okay. But they were strong and you're leaving out the drama.

Nickie: Oh – you want to hear the drama?

Mary: Laughing.

Nickie: There was a three way tie.

Edwin: Wait a minute I think you're cutting to the chase way too quickly here.

Nickie: Okay, tell the story.

Edwin: Because we were very involved (Nickie is laughing in the background) and I think that might have been the first battle that we actually fought together was

that battle to get the school named. We knew that she was one of the considerations so we asked the N.A.A.C.P. to write a letter, we asked the Fairfax Branch, we asked the Arlington Branch, we asked the Girl Scouts.

Nickie: She was a volunteer for the Girl Scouts for 30 years

Mary: Wow.

Nickie: in spite of the fact she didn't have any daughters.

Edwin: We asked everyone who was associated with her that we could think of to write a letter to email you know the City Council or the School Board. And you know every time we went before the School Board, you know, they would read these letters and say how many there were. And you know we were advocates for this – we wanted to see this happen probably more so than anybody wanted to see Eleanor Roosevelt or Dolly Madison – we rallied the troops.

Mary: That's wonderful.

Edwin: Nickie produced this brochure.

Nickie: Well it was a booklet and this is the thing that is interesting – we documented everything – why she should have been named – the disparity study – her political activity –

Mary: her teaching –

Nickie: - her public service and

Edwin: her association with the community.

Nickie: Right, so we ended up with about a six page booklet and we gave it to them and they said oh why didn't you tell us this in the first place.

Mary, Nickie and Edwin: All laughing.

Edwin: They were all saying well we didn't know about this how come you waited till now to tell us. You know actually if they had gone to the Virginia Room here in the local Library they could have found out all this information themselves.

Mary: Right.

Edwin: I guess maybe I had been fixated on E.B. Henderson, you know, and his accomplishments and Nickie provided the female touch.

Mary: That's wonderful.

Nickie: It started with his mother in law – I don't think you've mentioned Dad – Ed's mother and father were married until was it 1992 when she passed away.

Edwin: Yeah.

Nickie: And Dad remarried and it's been 10 years now and his new bride always when I met her – I met Ed in 2000, 2001 something like that and when he introduced me to his new step mom and the family would sit around the table and they would talk about E.B. and she'd say what about Mary Ellen Henderson what did she do did anybody think about her? So she peaked my curiosity.

Mary: Ah.

Nickie: And we started to do research on his grandmother and have discovered that his mother was absolutely amazing she comes from an amazing family. And so we were able to provide all that research documentation for the school name.

Now the other thing that happened with the school naming that was pretty amazing was they planned a wonderful dedication ceremony and I was on the planning committee and at one point they said you know it would be great if we could get a portrait of Mary Ellen Henderson to hang in the school. And they said I think there is somebody who could do it for a couple hundred dollars. Nickie do you have any suggestions – so I thought to myself it would be nice if we could get an African American who paints portraits. And I did my research and found out the best the most well-known famous African American portraitist was Simmie Knox who did President Clinton's portrait for the White House.

Mary: Yes.

Nickie: He's the first African American to have a portrait in the White House. So I thought to myself well why don't I ask him.

Mary: Might as well.

Nickie: Well of course everybody thought I was nuts. But I wrote a letter and sent an email and he finally emailed me back. And I called him and he said well send me a package about this lady and I'll consider it. I sent him the package and he didn't call me back. I called him and he said well maybe one of my students might be able to do that for you. And I thought great at least a Semmie Knox student and he said call me back. I called him back and he said oh I haven't gotten around to getting a student yet – call me back. I called him back a third time and he put me off again and he said I'll call you back and let you know. Finally one night I was sitting here about 10 o'clock at night and the phone rings and I pick up the phone and he says this is Semmie Knox and, I go really. He said I just read - he didn't say I just read your packet he said I read your packet and I think that I should be the one to do the portrait

Mary: Oh, that's wonderful.

Nickie: of Mrs. Henderson. And he did do the portrait.

Mary: Oh, that's wonderful.

Edwin: He gave us a discount rate though.

Nickie: Oh yeah.

Mary: Oh, that's nice.

Nickie: He gave us, he said, I said after I got really excited I said how much and he said well since it's for a school and I understand your budget constraints I'll give you my discount rate which is only \$25,000.00.

Mary: Oh my goodness.

Nickie: So I went okay thank you very much. Well I called the School Superintendent the next day and she said \$25,000.00 well you mean you really got Semmie Knox. And I said yes it's \$25,000.00. She said but you got Semmie Knox and I said yes, it's \$25,000.00. She said Semmie Knox really is going to do

the portrait and, I said yes. And she said well give me a couple of days. And sure enough within 48 hours there was a donor

Mary: Wow.

Nickie: who paid for the portrait and the portrait is hanging at the Mary Ellen elementary school.

Mary: Oh, that's wonderful.

Nickie: Oh, he's just the

Mary: Did the artist come to the dedication?

Nickie and Edwin: Yes.

Mary: Oh he did.

Nickie: Yes he did.

Mary: Oh, that's wonderful.

Nickie: And in fact he invited Ed and I to the studio to inspect the portrait before he was finished with it.

Mary: Wonderful. Oh that's a fantastic story. Well now let's come to you Ed okay, we've gotten your grandparents and your parents and let's talk about you.

Edwin: Okay, well I was born in Tuskegee, Alabama at the John Andrew Hospital me and my brother we were both born there in Tuskegee. And Tuskegee at that time was really ah, like to me I would say it was like growing up in Harlem during Harlem Renaissance. We had this fabulous history in our community of African American accomplishment and industry. The education, the Tuskegee Airmen, Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver and a very strong community because people came to Tuskegee to the University.

I grew up going to the Laboratory School for the University K through 8. Interrupted in the beginning by my father going to France to research cancer in a place in Gigerie about 40 Kilometers outside of Paris; and that was in 1961, 1962.

We traveled all over Europe; we went to the Berlin Wall in 1961 right after that was built. We went to Rome for Christmas. And I still remember those days with fond memories.

Coming back to Tuskegee

Nickie: They stayed there for a year and you were in school there for a year right?

Edwin: Yeah. We didn't go to an English speaking school either we went to a French speaking school.

Mary: Oh, so you leaned French real quick.

Nickie: Um hum.

Edwin: Yes.

Mary: No ESL program I bet.

Edwin: No, nothing like that.

Nickie: All four of the kids were in school that whole year right?

Edwin: Yeah. And when we came back we were all back

Nickie: Did you tell her where you traveled while you were there?

Edwin: Oh, we went all over the place. I said Rome you know, we went to Germany, we would go to Versailles on the way back from Paris and my favorite thing was off in the woods there was a merry go round with brass rings and it was free of course. But the fun was spearing the brass ring with the stake you had in your hand. And the paddle boats on the little reflecting pool. But you know these were things – we went everywhere.

Nickie: You camped all over Europe.

Mary: So you were about six or seven years old? I'm trying to figure out.

Edwin: Six.

Mary: Okay six or seven years old.

Edwin: Um hum.

Mary: Alright.

Nickie: You all went over on a ship didn't you?

Edwin: Yes, we went over on the Brimmin and then we came back on LaFrance which was a very fast ship took only 4 days and I think it took like a week on the Brimmin. But I don't want to do too much in there.

Nickie: But the car. They bought a car and then they camped throughout Europe.

Mary: Yeah, so you packed up the tent and everything in the trunk.

Nickie: Um hum.

Edwin: Well it was very common back in those days, I mean when you get tired you camp by the side of the road. But I also remember these huge snow drifts and you know like you would have a wall of snow taller than the car and just the road would be visible.

Mary: As wide as the car.

Edwin: No, that would be passable.

Mary: Wow

Edwin: And you know we went all over the place. We went to in the spring and summertime we went to Scandinavia. I remember being on the boat and it was almost midnight and the sun was still shining. We swam in a fiord. We went to Germany; we went past Check Point Charlie into Eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia. We had a wonderful experience

Mary: Right.

Edwin: we spent the better part of a year there maybe a little bit more.

Nickie: His mother wrote a book about the family the family travels. They took hundreds of slides so we have

Edwin: Well my Dad's an avid photographer. And at the Carver Foundation they had a dark room where I had my first photographic experiences. You use to get a negative and we would opaque a part of the negative and then print out a couple hundred post cards at Christmas time; with Merry Christmas Happy New Year within the portrait on them.

But yeah, Dad did all of these photographs and movies. He had a lot of 16 millimeter movies. But well I want to get off of Europe and let's get on with my life. Um you know we grew up in Tuskegee and at the Laboratory School you had people like Lionel Richie and Tom Joyner they were both in my sisters class in 1963 or 1964 I think it was probably 1964. And um you know we went to but we would also come up here in the summertime too – because my mother came into her grandfather's beach house in Annapolis, Maryland at a place called Highland Beach. Those were some of the most treasured moments of my childhood going up here. We'd come up here every summer in Annapolis to Highland Beach. And that was a community started by Frederick Douglas's son who bought 26 acres at what is now known as Highland Beach and sold lots to prominent African American citizens of Washington D.C. We grew up crabbing and fishing in the creek that separated Bay Ridge from Highland Beach. Those are my fondest childhood memories.

But Highland Beach was established because Fredrick Douglas's son on his honeymoon tried to get accommodations at a resort at the white community of Bay Ridge – he was denied and there was a bridge which he crossed over the creek by our house which is there now to – there was a black farmer who had 40 acres and named Brashiers. And he started a company called the Highland Beach; well Fredrick Douglas's Charles Douglas started and sold shares in the company which when you bought a share you bought a piece of land. And Fredrick Douglas's summer home is there that Charles Douglas built for his father. And it is

Mary: It's still there today?

Edwin: Oh yes, it has been refurbished and is a cultural center museum for the community. In this house they built a porch where he could sit and look across the bay over to where he was born in bondage

Mary: Ump.

Edwin: as a slave. But the place where Frederick Douglas's house is was originally John R. Francis's lot on the beach front. But Frederick Douglas called my great grandfather over to talk with him one day and told him that he didn't want the property next to the creek because he had small grandchildren that might fall in and drown. So they traded lots.

Mary: Wow.

Edwin: At Frederick Douglas's request they traded lots.

Mary: And he got a good view out of that.

Nickie: The best the absolute best.

Edwin: And so when they traded lots that's where the house where I spent my summers is; it was built in 1896, and in my opinion is by far the prize of Highland Beach because we actually still own the beach front. And a few years after the beach was established a lot of people on the front there owned the beach as well. But they got together and decided that they would donate their land to the community and make a community beach. Now my great grandfather said that's a find idea but I'm going to keep mine for myself. And so we still own the beachfront. And Highland Beach

Mary: Now was it integrated beach or was it just for blacks?

Edwin: This is the oldest Black Resort Community in the Country – Highland Beach.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: Um, of course the Douglass were the impetus behind the community being developed. Paul Lawrence Dunbar owned a lot but never built because he

became sick and passed. Mary Church Terrell and her husband John Mercer Langston no -

Nickie: Judge Terrell.

Edwin: Judge Terrell who was the first Federal Judge, African American Federal Judge over Washington D.C. they owned a home; um Booker T. Washington use to vacation there and we have a picture of him in our archives at the Bollin cottage. It was a black resort community; and we have enjoyed a home there all of my life and that's where we spent our summers.

Nickie: Now in 1907 E.B. Henderson began buying a lot at Highland Beach so that he and Mary Ellen at some point would be able to build a summer home which they did in what 1932

Mary: Wow.

Nickie: they built a home it's probably a half a block from where the Francis home. So the families were still inter

Mary: Yeah, it's amazing that they could build in 1932 during the Great Depression you know you just think about that you know.

Nickie: Yeah. That's one of the other things about Ed's grandmother from all accounts she was the person who handled the money and she was very frugal.

Edwin: My Dad use to say she knew how to pinch a penny a hundred different ways.

Mary: Laughing.

Nickie: So in some of the letters that we discovered recently the ones that were written in the 1940's She's obviously she's forward thinking. She's telling E.B. well they're saying that we're going to be in a War; I want you to do da, da, da.

Mary: Oh.

Nickie: Go da, da, da, depending on. We talked about buying a car. Go such and such a place and see what you can get it for. One line I remember in particular was she says you know I don't believe in hording but if there's going to be a war we need to get such and such and she sends a list of things she wants him to get.

Mary: Ump.

Nickie: I'm sorry go head.

Edwin: I don't know where I was.

Mary: Okay.

Nickie: You were telling the yarn

Mary: We as I say I may need to stop this again we've gone two hours almost fantastic. But I would like to wrap it up. I don't want to cut you short, but I just need – rather than come back another day if you don't mind we'll keep on going.

Edwin: Yeah, sure.

Mary: Okay. Alright let me just stop this.

[Recording paused]

Edwin: Okay, I think I can do it in 10 minutes.

Mary: Okay, and we are recording, okay.

Edwin: Okay, well ah I finished 8th grade at Chambliss Children's House which was the Tuskegee Institute Laboratory School. And then my parents decided that I should go away to boarding school and all of my siblings went away to at least two years of boarding school. All of my siblings went to at least two years of Boarding School but I went away all four. I went to a private Presbyterian African American private school near Augusta, Georgia called Boggs Academy and I did a lot of growing up there I played football, soccer and track and graduated from there in 1974.

Oh, another thing I would like to also add is my Boy Scout experience. My father James Henderson brought scouting to Tuskegee. He had always wanted to be a scout but they didn't have a scout troop here in Falls Church when he grew up. His mother of course was associated with Girl Scouts and so in the late 1940's he started the Boy Scouts in Tuskegee. And my brother became an eagle scout and of course there was the expectation that I would too, so I did. We went to National Jamborees and camporees and other scouting experiences and I have to say that it for both of us it gave us a foundation in conservation and natural resources and outdoorsy type endeavors hunting, fishing and other things like that water sports. Um, so we became scouts, we excelled in scouting sense of accomplishment.

After finishing Tuskegee um I ah entered – ah, I went to Tuskegee and majored in Forestry. After a year of Forestry I changed and ah decided to pursue a degree in history because I was you know had a devout interest in history maybe stemming from the fact that I knew a lot about my own history and African American History really being steeped in history all my life. I did though have a profound interest in photography as well.

And ah after my first year in forestry I went to leave Tuskegee and come to Howard to pursue communications - a degree in communications; but my big love was photography. And my senior year at Tuskegee through the United Negro College Fund I had a exhibit or at least two pieces of my photography exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. After that I came to New York and Washington to pursue a career in photography. It didn't work out really; I went back to Tuskegee and became a ASEDA Counselor at a community college.

Mary: What kind of counselor?

Edwin: ASEDA which is a government Labor Department program.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: And got myself together and got grounded and then I moved to California to pursue an education in photography at the Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California.

Nickie: You finished your degree first didn't you at Tuskegee?

Edwin: Yeah, I finished, I got a bachelor's degree from Tuskegee in history. And um two years later went to California to pursue a degree in photography. While I was there in Santa Barbara pursuing my degree in photography I got married and my son Michael was born. I married Garnetta Darton who was from Santa Barbara, California and Michael was born. And I finished my degree in photography from Brooks. And then I left to look for work; I moved to Oakland California. Garnetta and Michael stayed in Santa Barbara; we later divorced. But I enrolled at Laney College into a Television Engineering Program there and became a, worked as a freelance photographer and a – I worked at a TV station. I had an internship at KTVU on channel 2 in Oakland. And I also worked at the college TV station as a master control operator um or a technical director.

After two years in Oakland I decided to move to Los Angeles to where I could visit my son more frequently and to pursue a career in the visual arts down in Los Angeles. I was hired by the Compton Unified School District to create a department of television – Educational Television. And after a few months of that they said that the grant had run out and that they did have a lot of teaching positions if I wanted to teach. I had felt you know the ah the pressures of being a starving artist and a photographer and I decided that to take a regular pay check might be a good thing. So I started teaching at an Elementary School in Compton, California. After five years there I decided to – well there were many things that I did while I was teaching including I worked at the Grammys and the American Music Awards each year.

Mary: As a photographer?

Edwin: With the production crew.

Mary: Oh, okay.

Edwin: And then, let's see I also took a leave of absence to go to Africa with the Reggae Sun Splash tour one year; which didn't pan out and ah it's a good thing it didn't because after two weeks into it they canceled the tour and everybody came back. But I decided to return to Tuskegee and pursue a Master's in

Counseling in 1991. And in 1992 my mother was diagnosed with cancer and so I was there while she was sick. She passed in December of 1992. I finished my degree in – my Masters of Education Counseling in 1993 and that is when I moved to Falls Church.

Now when I moved back here and took the house at 307 South Maple Avenue the house had been rented out for 20 or 30 years I'm not really sure exactly. So the upstairs apartment was not being rented at the time. So I moved into the upstairs apartment with my second wife Rosalyn and her two sons. And we lived here and I started to think about renovating this house back into how I remembered it when I use to come visit my grandparents. But in 1993 I received a fellowship from the International Foundation for Education Self Help, the Teachers for Africa Program and in January, 1994 I went to Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya for six months; and worked at the United States International University there in Kasarani, in Nairobi, Kenya.

Mary: Teaching?

Edwin: Well I was working for ah, with the ah under the ah the Dean of Academic Affairs creating a student – a ah graduate assistance program to facilitate student services.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: They just built 2 multi six story dormitories and their population had grown from 300 to over two thousand because the University of Nairobi is on strike. And so the only place where a lot of students could go to college was U.S.I.U.

And so I created this graduate assistance program to facilitate student services because now they had a campus and they had all these students that needed different services and other things. And rather than paying full service they could offer scholarships to graduate students who would then work as dormitory assistants and counselors and stuff like that. And so that's what I did there but I traveled all over Kenya to all of the various parks, Mombasa, I went to Uganda

once. Wanted to go to Ethiopia and didn't quite make it. But six months was a short time actually.

Came back here in June and in June started interviewing for a position in Fairfax County Public Schools where I work to this day. But right after I got back I started working with the Tener Hill Festival ah Street Festival and of course that helped me a lot in this community. It was David Eckert who created the Festival; and then we worked together over a number of years and we worked at trying to resurrect the history of the Civil Rights Movement here in Falls Church.

In 1997 we incorporated the Tener Hill Heritage Foundation which it's' goal is to resurrect the Civil Rights History of Northern Virginia and Falls Church in particular.

Mary: Now you are at Luther Jackson today?

Edwin: Yes.

Mary: And did you have any relatives that attended Luther Jackson?

Edwin: Actually no.

Mary: No.

Edwin: If you look back in the records Luther Jackson was a good friend of E.B. Henderson. I have a letter from Luther Jackson that talks about – congratulates my grandmother on her study which was published I think in the Falls Church Echo.

Mary: That's the disparity study?

Edwin: The Disparity Study.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: And I also have a number of pamphlets of Luther Jackson's from the Virginia Voters League and the organizations which he started. You know he ah

he taught at Virginia State College, but also worked very closely with Carter G. Woodson and the Association for Negro Life and History.

Mary: Now are you working toward all these wonderful letters and photos and all creating a museum or anything for your family?

Edwin: That is the goal.

Mary: Okay.

Edwin: That is the goal.

Mary: And where would the museum be?

Edwin: In this house.

Mary: In this house okay.

Edwin: Now whether the house will remain here or the house will be moved and we sell the land is still a consideration. We haven't determined yet and of course it depends on a lot of other factors.

However we are also building – you see in 1999 we built the Tener Hill Monument which is a 14 foot free standing arch made of pink granite which gives tribute to the 1915 story. In addition to that we are working in conjunction with the City of Falls Church, Fairfax County and Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority to create a Tener Hill Civil Rights Memorial Park dedicated to civil rights history of Falls Church. And that's going to be at – on Tener Hill Road, 106 Tener Hill Road. There is a state historical marker there on that property. It is only the state's second historical marker here in the City of Falls Church. The first one being the Falls Church; and the second one here is Tener Hill. So we have a – we've Tener Hill Foundation has been in existence since 1997, that's 11 years now and I think we've done a lot but we're not done yet.

Mary: It's certainly a tremendous story.

Edwin: When we get done we hope that there will be a permanent recognition something visible and tangible that will speak to this grand history that we are trying to resurrect to place in perpetuity for all to see and recognize.

Mary: Now do you share your family history with your own students?

Edwin: I do.

Mary: That's very good, something they should know.

Edwin: I do and there is a move afoot to incorporate these resources and this story into the curriculum here in Fairfax County and Falls Church City Public Schools as well.

Mary: That's wonderful, that's wonderful. Well is there anything else that you'd like - or parting thoughts or does your siblings help with their Tener Foundation at all?

Edwin: I'd like to think that they would like to but for the most part it's me and Nickie.

Mary: Yeah.

Nickie: And who is Nickie?

Edwin: She's my wife Nickie.

Mary: Yes.

Nickie: You stopped with you married Rossalyn and moved in this house and you didn't say anything else.

Mary: Laughing.

Nickie: Are you a bigamist? Are you a bigamist dear?

Edwin: No, in 1999 right before the monument was built and dedicated my wife and I

Nickie: He got divorced in 2000.

Edwin: divorced. Well we separated and were later divorced. My current wife and I met in 2000 through a mutual friend. And when I met Nickie I told her you must come see my archives. I knew she had a museum background and so I told her that I have all kinds of documents and pictures and I would like her to come and take a look at them.

You want to tell that part of the story honey? And so she came and I think she didn't believe me at first she just thought I was trying to be – I knew that she was a museum professional and I

Mary: Right, it was a line.

Edwin: was trying to impress her. And so she got over here and I think she took the better part of a day just looking through stuff. And she agreed yeah you really do have something here. But it was in a box and even though I thought it was better than it was in the attic at the house at the beach getting eaten up by rats - and so things were in pieces and eaten up by rats. It still wasn't being preserved in a museum professional's opinion – in an archival fashion. And so she has helped me to preserve my legacy. And last year we found a whole other box down in Tuskegee in the basement of ah love letters and documents and all kinds of stuff that adds to the story.

Mary: Wow.

Edwin: So we've really doubled our findings. And then in, so ah Nickie and I built a relationship. We worked together over a number of years on the Tener Hill story, the exhibit and the archiving of documents; trying to preserve this house and the story of Tener Hill. Then on 07-07-07 we became husband and wife.

Mary: Very nice. Well I hope – you said you're writing for the Washingtonian magazine.

Edwin: Well that's still speculative it may or may not happen – I'm not going to say it's a fact.

Mary: Well I'm suggesting a book here you know. I'm suggesting a book about the Henderson, Tener families and all of Falls Church. Here I'm going to stop.